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SUBJECT: IDPs in Central and Eastern Equatoria: USAID
Plans for Assisted Returns

Summary and Comment

11. In February, two officials from the USAID Sudan Field Office (USAID/SFO) in Nairobi traveled to Juba, Kajo-Keji, Nimule, and Lobone in Central and Eastern Equatoria States of Southern Sudan. The USAID team met with government officials and internally displaced persons (IDPs) to discuss plans to assist returnees. The governor and other officials of Jonglei State (the state of origin for many IDPs) and representatives from three USAID partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs) accompanied the USAID team. The team met with Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS) and U.N. officials in Juba before traveling to Mangalatore and Bamurye IDP camps in Kajo-Keji County, and to Nimule town and Lobone IDP camp in Magwi County. The USAID team held large public meetings with IDPs in all locations. It is clear from these meetings that most IDPs from Jonglei State are eager to return home. USAID is planning an assisted returns program to transport up to 20,000 IDPs from these camps to villages in Jonglei beginning in March. End summary and comment.

Background

12. Two USAID representatives from the USAID/SFO spent a week in Juba town and south of Juba in Kajo-Keji County west of the Nile River and Magwi County east of the Nile. The USAID team traveled with the Governor and the Political Advisor of Jonglei State, the County Commissioner of South Bor County, and senior staff of USAID partners Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), and Pact, Inc. The purpose of the trip was to meet with government officials and with IDPs from the five main IDP camps in Central and Eastern Equatoria, and to review the IDP situation and the feasibility of an assisted returns program to Jonglei.

13. The five IDP camps in Kajo-Keji and Magwi were established in 1993 and 1994, following a 1991 attack on Bor County in Jonglei State by the southern faction that broke away from Sudan People's Liberation Movement

(SPLM). The attackers, mainly Nuer, killed thousands of people and stole or killed hundreds of thousands of cattle, destroying the livelihood of the Bor Dinka and driving about 150,000 of Dinka to Equatoria, where camps were established on both banks of the Nile. Another group fled with their cattle from South Bor west to Mundri, where they remained until 2005. USAID has been the main donor to these IDP camps. The NGOs CRS and NPA have been USAID's key partners from the beginning - NPA west of the Nile and CRS east of the Nile. Both run large logistics programs, trucking food aid from Mombasa, Kenya, and providing agricultural inputs and training.

¶4. Since 1997 USAID has invested in services in Bor County to prepare for the eventual return of the IDPs. CRS and NPA are implementing food aid and agricultural programs - CRS in South Bor, and NPA in Twic East and Duk Counties. (Note: The Bor area is now split into three counties. End note.) Food aid is trucked in during the dry season from Mombasa through Lokichokio and delivered to rural locations for distribution to returnees. NPA and CRS also provide agricultural inputs, mosquito nets, and tools to assist returnees with clearing the bush and building huts from local materials. Local NGOs are providing health services, USAID partner Pact, Inc. is drilling boreholes, and the NGO CARE is building schools and running a veterinary program.

¶5. The camp population has decreased over the years as people have returned to Bor or gone elsewhere. The total estimate of Bor IDPs currently in the two counties is more than 45,000. The latest figures are based on headcounts in 2005 and are being reconfirmed in registrations. In Kajo-Keji County, there are about 14,500 Bor Dinka in three camps. Bor IDPs account for 90

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percent of Nimule town's 12,800 IDPs, who fled a nearby camp in December due to insecurity. Nimule is now overcrowded and services are overstretched. Lobone has 32,000 IDPs, including 21,000 from Bor.

¶6. The large concentration of Nilotic IDPs from Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal has become a destabilizing factor in Equatoria. When the IDPs came to Equatoria in the early 1990s, they pushed out thousands of Equatorians to Uganda, where most still live in refugee camps. In addition, most of the SPLA armed forces deployed in Equatoria were Nilotics. Now that peace has come to the South, people want to return to their home areas to reclaim their land, re-establish themselves, and develop their villages and counties. It is also GoSS policy that IDPs should return to their home areas. Tensions have been high in recent months between Equatorians and Nilotics, with several incidents of fighting and some killings reported. This is causing Nilotics from Equatoria to return to Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal. The biggest group of Nilotics in Equatoria is the Bor Dinka.

Coordination with GoSS and the U.N.

¶7. Before traveling to the IDP camps, USAID and the Governor of Jonglei met with GoSS Vice President Riek Machar in Juba to brief him on the purpose of the trip and to solicit a commitment from GoSS to provide security along the routes of return. VP Machar was fully knowledgeable of the situation and pleased at the mission, which if successful will improve stability in both Equatoria and Jonglei. He pledged GoSS support for the effort, including security along return routes.

¶8. USAID also met with heads of U.N. agencies for Southern Sudan in Juba before and after the trip. The

U.N. is leading a parallel returns program, aimed at the Bor Dinka cattle camps that were in Mundri and smaller groups of Bor Dinka in other locations in Equatoria. The U.N. and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are running a barge operation from Juba to Bor town that is committed to transporting approximately 11,000 people over 5 months. (Note: The barge operation is temporarily halted due to the acute watery diarrhea outbreaks in Juba and Bor towns. End note.) It may be possible at some point to transport some of the Kajo-Keji and Magwi IDPs on the U.N. barge; however, the U.N. does not have additional capacity to be substantially involved in the USAID-funded Kajo-Keji and Magwi returns program. USAID and the U.N. will coordinate closely. Since local authorities and the IDPs themselves fear further security problems in Equatoria, the NGOs supported by USAID are planning to begin to transport IDPs to Bor by road in March.

Previous Preparation for Returns

¶9. USAID has supported several activities in preparation for the return of these IDPs to their home areas. In 2001, USAID funded a pilot project through NPA that transported approximately 6,000 IDPs from these same camps to Bor. Though successful, the pilot did not lead to larger returns due to concerns about insecurity and lack of services in Bor. In December 2004, USAID through CRS transported 50 IDPs from all these camps to visit their home areas in Bor for 5 weeks so the IDPs could see what facilities and services were in place. In January 2006, USAID through Pact, Inc. brought Bor elders from various places, including Khartoum and these IDP camps, to meet with local and state authorities in Bor to discuss how the Bor community that scattered in 1991 will come together in 2006 from various locations of displacement. For the past five years, USAID has supported civil society groups (mainly church leaders) to reconcile the various ethnic communities of Jonglei who have been fighting each other for most of the past

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decade.

Findings

¶10. The team found that the vast majority of IDPs from Bor are ready to return, but require assistance with transportation. Approximately 1,000 people attended the team's final meeting, held in Lobone, and expressed eagerness to return. The IDPs are satisfied with security in Bor following the signing of the CPA and the establishment of the GoSS in Juba and the Jonglei State government in Bor town. The IDPs are aware that some services will be poorer in Bor than in the Equatoria camps, but they are also aware of the factors pushing them from Equatoria. IDPs in Magwi County fear for their security should they remain in Equatoria, as this county has been the main area of activity of the Lord's Resistance Army. In December, 10 IDPs were killed outside of Lobone camp, and another 2 killed near Nimule town. The IDPs also know that Equatorian refugees are returning from Uganda, and are aware of outbreaks of conflict in other parts of Equatoria between Nilotics and Equatorians. One woman in Mangalatore camp said, "Those who own this land have come to reclaim their land and have started to build their huts among us." Finally, the IDPs know that the U.N. is assisting Bor Dinka in other parts of Equatoria to return to Bor, including the very large cattle herd that devastated local farms in Mundri for 13 years. This group crossed the Nile in December and January on its way back to Bor.

¶11. At all meetings, officials from Jonglei State and the County Commissioners from Magwi and Kajo-Keji stressed that the IDPs are not being told to leave Equatoria and welcome to remain. Nevertheless, USAID's support to the IDPs in the camps as a special category of beneficiaries will end in the near future. IDPs who choose to remain in Equatoria will have to integrate into communities and, if needed, be assisted through general assessments of vulnerable groups.

Next Steps

¶12. At the end of the trip, the USAID/GoSS/NGO team agreed to commence a program to assist IDPs from the Equatorian camps to return to their home areas. First steps include a formal request by the GoSS to USAID for support to such a program, voluntary registration of IDPs who are ready to return, medical screening (primarily for sleeping sickness, which is prevalent in Kajo-Keji and parts of Magwi), and a survey of routes and overnight rest points. The team agreed that the program will begin in Nimule because of insecurity and the town's overcrowded conditions and overstretched resources. The second priority will be Lobone, and third will be the camps in Kajo Keji. Registration of IDPs and medical screening began in Nimule in early March.

¶13. It will not be possible for all interested IDPs to return before the expected commencement of rains in Jonglei in May, when rural roads will become impassable. The program will resume when the rains end in October and November. With USAID funding, agencies are pre-positioning relief supplies, including food aid, agricultural and fishing inputs, mosquito nets, and grass and sticks for shelter, in rural Bor.

¶14. NPA and CRS will be the lead organizations in the program. Both NGOs have been working with the Bor IDPs from the beginning and are sufficiently established to assist the IDPs upon their return to Bor. NPA and CRS have the management and logistical capability and the funding from USAID/DCHA, through the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Office of Food for Peace, to do this quickly and well. Funding has been provided to transport 20,000 IDPs to Bor, which is about one-half the total IDP population. USAID may have

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additional funding available in FY 2007 for the remaining IDPs. Funding is also available to assist the smaller number of IDPs from within Equatoria going shorter distances to return to their home areas.

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